



# Wildlife Journal

Happy New Year! With the passing of 2008, a year most everyone would like to soon forget, we now begin a new year with high expectations that 2009 will be better than 2008. In this issue we will explain a new plan for our hunting license program that we believe is a win-win for both Rayonier and you our valued customer. This plan will give you the comfort of knowing well in advance the payment schedule for each future year. This program will also give our hunting clubs the assurance that so long as your club remains in good standing with Rayonier, you will continue to be able to license that recreational license unit (RLU). Also in this issue I will share some of my experi-

ence for hunting the rut. We hope this free advice will be valuable to you as you begin hunting the Alabama rut this season.



I recently harvested this deer on a rub line. Please send in photos so that we can share more of your successful hunts.

We will also discuss some habitat qualities that are sure to help you start seeing more deer. In The Wrap Up section, we will discuss a few of the upcoming important dates as we are now less than five months from the hunting license renewal period. Please take the time to put these dates on your calendar so that you won't be caught off guard. And finally, please keep sending us your wildlife photos.

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## The New Alabama Resource Unit Hunting License Program

Since becoming the Alabama Resource Development Manager in January 2008, I have heard one consistent request from our hunting clubs. That request has been for a long term agreement. With great consideration we have developed a plan that we think is a win-win for our hunters and for Rayonier.

The hunting license program will give hunters an opportunity to have a license agreement with Rayonier that does not expire until the spring of 2012. The agreement will be binding so long as the hunting

club makes its payment by the annual due date, provides Rayonier with a list of member signatures on Exhibit A annually, and fully complies with the agreement terms. As always, Rayonier will also reserve the right to terminate the agreement for any of the reasons detailed in paragraph 12 of the current annual license agreement.

We think the new hunting license program will give our hunting clubs

greater incentive to manage the deer herds on the RLUs that they license from Rayonier. As part of the program, hunting clubs will be encouraged to institute some type of quality management for each RLU. Clubs will also be required to complete a food plot acreage amendment that will be attached to the hunting license agreement. Once all requirements have been met, the club

will receive a fully executed hunting license agreement that will be in effect through the spring of 2012.

You will receive more information regarding the rates and terms of the new agreement in early February 2009. We hope this will alleviate the concerns that many of our hunters have expressed about being able to retain their hunting license with Rayonier.

## A Few Tips for Successful Hunting During the Rut

In the earlier issues of Rayonier's *Wildlife Journal* we have focused on game and habitat management. In this issue, with the main phase of the rut about to be upon us, I thought it would be fitting to give our hunters some free advice based on my few years of experience. Hunting the rut is certainly the most fun and rewarding time to hunt. The bucks that generally are difficult, or impossible, to see during daylight hours the other months of the year will be slightly less cautious during these few weeks. I will describe to you where I have found success during the rut, but remember this is only free advice. Take my advice for what it is worth, and not for scientific fact.

*When you find a good rub line, you can almost bet that a buck is frequently using that area.*

The first step that I take each year during the pre-rut, which I consider to be basically from the start of hunting season through about New Year's Day, is to identify the areas where I see a concentration of does near feeding areas and thickets suitable for bedding areas. Generally does will concentrate their feeding in food plots, so these are always the areas where I begin searching for lots of doe tracks. From the feeding area I try and identify trails which lead away from the food source and follow them back to a bedding area. Once I have identified the bedding area, I then will start to look for rubs. In my opinion, finding good rub lines is the best proof you have that bucks are present in an area.

Once I have identified a good rub line, I start to

look at some indicators of the rubs that are clues as to the buck's direction of travel on that route. I also examine each rub itself as an indicator of how the buck's antlers might look. Before the days of digital game cameras this technique was probably more relevant, but it is still useful. When evaluating a rub, look for stems beside or behind the rub to find skinned bark. The skinned places will give you some idea as to the length of the buck's tines and spread between main beams. When addressing the main stem that has been rubbed, imagine that the deer probably rubbed the stem by placing it between the brow tine and main beam of one side of



**Notice how the buck was able to skin the bark of all the stems around this rub. The stem directly behind the rub is about 10" from the main rubbed stem. The two stems on the side were about 6"-8" from the main rub. From this rub I would estimate this is a fairly decent buck working this rub line.**

his antlers. If the stem is stable enough that it was probably not moved around much while the rub occurred, then you can look at the surrounding stems and make estimates about the tine lengths and possibly the spread of the buck. Hardwoods are ideal for employing this technique because of their ability to regenerate from stump sprouts and form several fairly stout stems in a bunch from one origin.

Most of the time a buck will rub a solitary stem that stands alone with nothing else around it to gauge the antler length. When this occurs you can't really make much of an inference about the antler size of a given buck. However, you can use these rubs to give you clues to the direction of travel for that buck.

Generally a good rub line will have a young sapling skinned every 25-50 yards. When you find a good rub line, you can almost bet that a buck is frequently using that area. If the rubs seem to be on a side that would suggest they were made leading away from the feeding area; then that is probably a good place to be in the morning. If they are going to the feeding area; then that is likely a better place to hunt in the afternoon. As these rubs approach the bedding areas of does, the probability that a buck will travel that route during the rut is only multiplied.

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## A Few Tips for Successful Hunting During the Rut *(continued from pg. 2)*

That is the logic that I put behind my pre-rut scouting. I have seen greater success finding and hunting the right rub lines at the right time using this technique than any other technique I have used in the field to harvest rutting bucks. While I have spent hours that have turned into days hunting scrapes and have had only limited success.

I have been going to a certain piece of public land in Mississippi for four years now and this is where I really learned to refine this technique out of necessity. When I go to this area, I typically have 5 or 6 consecutive days to hunt. If I take a deer it is well worth the trip, but if I don't, I have to wait a whole year to get to go again. It is this level of necessity to discover a technique that will work and work quickly that has helped me and others who I have shared it with.

The first two years that I went out to this place I saw a few deer, but none of them were shooters. I couldn't understand that because I was setting over, or near, scrapes that appeared to be made by very large bucks. Like any hunter, I spend a great deal of time focused on hunting so I came across a piece of information one day that explained a study where bucks visited scrapes about 95% of the time at night. I can't remember the name of the article or the publication, but I owe a great deal of my recent hunting success to that article. Before, I had focused on scrapes during the rut and treated rubs almost as if they didn't exist. Since I reversed that thinking, I have had some good success over the past two trips to Mississippi.

I generally spend the first two to three days of the trip finding the rub lines that are used heavily and lead from

the feeding area to the bedding area or vice versa. The last two or three days of the trip I place my blind where the routes the does use back to the bedding areas and the rub lines seem to come together and I have had a good deal of success. Usually the success comes sooner rather than later. In the last two trips, I have taken real nice eight pointers the first morning that I sat on the rub lines.

I think bucks continue to use the same routes that they have used all season to travel to and from the bedding areas during the rut. The difference is that they will spend more time near the areas of doe concentration during daylight hours. That is the belief that has made hunting rub lines successful for me. I encourage you to try this technique for yourself.



**This stem has been rubbed on two different sides possibly meaning the buck uses this route more than once per day.**

## Hunt The Edge, See More Deer

While the above article was based on the opinion of a moderately successful hunter, this article is based on science. Game species prefer to concentrate their movement and feeding near edges where habitat types change. This preference is known as the edge effect. Edge can be either natural (inherent) or man made (induced).

An example of inherent edge would be a transition zone where upland pine for-

est meets a bottomland hardwood ecosystem, where forestland meets a



**Induced edge created where a clearcut joins a wetland.**

field, along a stream bank, or a steep change in topography. An induced edge can occur where different aged pine plantations meet, along roadsides, or near a clearcut. You may have noticed this phenomenon before, but if you haven't; start looking for edge and you will greatly improve your hunting experience.

It is not known exactly why most game species prefer the edge of habitat, but it is thought that the variety of food sources and potential bedding area may have

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## Hunt The Edge, See More Deer (continued from pg. 3)

an impact on why game animals tend to congregate along edges. We do know that the more you involve edge in your planning for locating a stand, the more successful you will be as a hunter. Locating stands where multiple edges intersect can even multiply the edge effect. I try to locate my stand where at least three different types of edge occur whenever possible.

I look for a water course, a topography change, and a timber type change all coming together at the same point. If you don't have much elevation or timber type changes, try an intersection of a thin SMZ where it intersects a road and maybe has two different aged plantations in sight. You can also try to locate a clearcut that has a

skinny finger that slopes down into a wetland. All of these different edges will increase the game animal movement where you are hunting and lead to a more enjoyable hunting experience.



Induced edge along a forest road.



Inherent edge along a water feature.

## The Wrap Up: Important Upcoming Dates

### February 16, 2009

A letter will be mailed to each club explaining the 2009-2012 (3 year) hunting license agreement procedure and rate schedule. An email reminder will also be sent to all clubs to look for the letter in the mail. Please allow one full week for delivery.

### April 15, 2009

Rayonier Hunting License renewal period begins. Clubs will have 30 days to log onto [www.rayonierhunting.com](http://www.rayonierhunting.com) and follow the steps of accepting the renewal and completing paperwork. Clubs will mail their agreement and payment to Rayonier's Andalusia Office no later than **May 15, 2009**.

### June 1, 2009

The bidding period begins on all RLUs not renewed during the 30 day renewal period. During this period, available RLUs can be viewed at any time. Gates will be opened to each tract on June 1, 2009 and not be closed until bidding ends on **July 9, 2009**.

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